



ALERT

News from the UFMCC
on AIDS Legislation, Education, Research and Treatment.

GENERAL COUNCIL RECEIVES 1990 UFMCC AIDS SURVEY REPORT

The UFMCC AIDS Ministry reported to the General Council the results of the 1990 UFMCC HIV/AIDS Survey at their Los Angeles meeting in October. In the 45% of UFMCC Church groups responding to the survey, there have been 2,250 deaths from HIV/AIDS, and there are currently 1,177 persons with AIDS, and 1,424 HIV+ persons.

There were 31 churches which have never had a death from AIDS, 28 churches which have no persons with AIDS, and 13 churches which have no person who is HIV+.

These are very "soft" statistics. Many survey responses, particularly in the larger churches, gave very round figures, and noted that these were estimates. Many noted that they had no idea how many HIV+ persons there were in their churches, since circumstances demanded anonymity.

Since only 45% of UFMCC congregations responded, we can assume that in the whole of UFMCC there are approximately double the figures seen here. In other words, there are approximately:

4,500 deaths from AIDS in UFMCC
2,850 HIV+ persons in the Fellowship, and
2,350 persons with full-blown AIDS in UFMCC.

The survey also disclosed that only 10 responding churches have workplace policies for employees with disabilities and/or catastrophic illness, although it was noted that the Northwest District has such a policy in place for all their churches. Virtually all churches responded that they adhere to the Policy on Disabilities and/or Life-Threatening Illnesses approved in the Board of Elders Report at General Conference XIV.

Many respondents requested financial aid from UFMCC AIDS Ministry, or access to funds, for everything from benevolence funds for PWA's, to maintenance of local AIDS Ministries. Regrettably, UFMCC AIDS Ministry is not in a position to provide these funds.

However, in response to the growing need for financial help among UFMCC clergy with AIDS in countries with no public directed assistance, the Fellowship Sunday Offering is being directed to the UFMCC Benevolence Fund, since that Fund has been virtually depleted by the needs of several clergy with AIDS over the last year.

NOVEMBER, 1990
Editor: Rev. A. Stephen Pieters

Some respondents requested that ALERT provide more information on what local churches are doing in AIDS Ministry. Some suggested that ALERT focus on spiritual and theological issues, while others wanted more of a focus on research and legislative issues. A number requested more resources on grief, death and dying, and care for the caregivers.

Two respondents stated that the UFMCC AIDS Ministry is "redundant," since they have all the resources they need locally. The vast majority of respondents indicated that they are pleased with UFMCC AIDS Ministry. Scoring particularly well were ALERT, the pamphlet "Spiritual Strength for Survival," and Rev. Steve Pieters' preaching and workshops in many local churches.

EASTMAN AND STONER HONORED AT ANIN CONFERENCE

Rev. Elder Don Eastman, Second Vice-Moderator and Treasurer of the UFMCC Board of Elders, and Rev. Lynn Stoner, pastor of Redeemer MCC of Flint, Michigan, were honored at the Awards Banquet of the AIDS National Interfaith Network (ANIN) Annual Conference. This year's conference was held at the Bismarck Hotel in Chicago, IL, September 16-18, 1990.

Rev. Eastman was honored for his work as Founding Chairperson of the AIDS National Interfaith Network. Rev. Eastman stepped down as Chairperson at the Annual Meeting of ANIN, held September 18, 1990. Both Rev. Eastman and Rev. Dr. Stephen Pieters were re-elected to the ANIN Board of Directors.

Rev. Stoner was honored for her HIV/AIDS Ministry in Flint, Michigan. Cited for her excellence in pastoral ministry, it was also noted that she performs her AIDS ministry in addition to her duties as pastor; and a full-time secular job.

Keynote speakers for the conference included B.J. Stiles, Executive Director of the National Leadership Coalition on AIDS, and Sonya L. Hunt, Minority AIDS Education Coordinator for the Arkansas Department of Health.

SURVIVING AIDS

by Michael Callen

"Michael Callen has written a moving chronicle of the heroic struggles of long-term survivors. His book is a message of hope and inspiration for everyone affected by AIDS."

--Mathilde Krim

American Foundation for AIDS Research

"Refreshingly candid, unsentimental, and sometimes angry, Callen's report blasts much of the media's lugubrious 'AIDSpeak' and convinces us that 'there is no right or wrong way to cheat death'."

--Kirkus Reviews

Aids is not always fatal.

In the first book on the subject, nationally renowned political activist and long-term AIDS survivor, Michael Callen, unravels the mysteries surrounding this best-kept secret of the epidemic.

In 1982 - the year Michael Callen was diagnosed with AIDS - his prognosis was grim. Most doctors believed that no one survived AIDS for much longer than a year. But eight years later, Michael is one of hundreds of long-term survivors of AIDS who are still alive and doing fine.

Convinced that "the repetition of the notion that everyone dies from AIDS denies both the reality of - but more importantly, the possibility of - survival", Callen spent three and a half years researching and writing SURVIVING AIDS (Harper Collins, November 7, 1990, \$18.95) a piercing rebuttal against the public ignorance and sloppy reporting that created this very damaging lie. SURVIVING AIDS tells Callen's own story and, through in-depth interviews, the stories of thirteen other long-term survivors - men and women, gay, straight, and bisexual, black, white, and brown - each of whom is living a remarkable life. These are stories of their fighting spirit, their courage, their drama, and their sometimes outrageous sense of humor. These stories present their answers to the question, "Why am I still alive?"

To determine precisely how many long-term survivors there are (by Callen's definition as anyone who has survived full-blown AIDS for three years or more), and how much survival probabilities have increased, Callen begins the book with a review of the three major studies on the subject: one in New York City, led by Dr. Richard Rothenberg; the national C.D.C. study, led by Dr. Ann Hardy; and, one in San Francisco, led by Dr. George Lemp.

Callen's review not only confirms a 10% long-term survival rate, but on closer examination these studies disprove numerous misconceptions about AIDS. These studies found that:

There are long term survivors of PCP (pneumocystis carinii pneumonia)

Some people have survived more than a decade with AIDS and are still going strong

It is possible to survive AIDS without AZT or other similarly toxic treatments

It may be possible to cure oneself of AIDS

Some long-term survivors are people of color

There are IV drug users who have survived three or more years with full-blown AIDS

Many long-term survivors lead more or less normal lives

Once you've survived for approximately five years, your probability of dying from AIDS levels off

Having confirmed that people are surviving, Callen, a rabid rationalist, at first turned to science to find out exactly why some survived and others did not. He concludes, rather sadly, that no studies have been done to answer this vital question and further, it is highly unlikely that one will be done in the near future. It is at this point that Callen proceeds to secure the best evidence available - the descriptive and impressionistic evidence from long-term survivors themselves.

One of the survivors profiled is Rev. Steve Pieters, Editor of ALERT and Field Director of UFMCC AIDS Ministry.

One of the numerous conclusions that readers will draw from these poignant and heart-felt interviews is that all human beings harbor a survival instinct - "a will to live." Furthermore, it becomes apparent through these interviews that in order to survive AIDS this instinct must be aggressively encouraged.

Callen's search to find the source that spreads "the gloom and doom" about AIDS - the very thing that does not aggressively encourage "the will to live" - leads directly to the media. In the chapter entitled "The Propaganda of Hopelessness", Callen interviews the top AIDS reporters in the United States. Each in turn, acknowledges that they foment fatalism and that they do, in fact, bear the largest responsibility for shaping the public's perception of AIDS as an automatic death sentence.

SURVIVING AIDS is more than an important book on a timely subject. It is a book that will re-shape how Americans think about - and respond to - AIDS.

HIV/AIDS MINISTRY AT MCC - KANSAS CITY

MCC-KC has been blessed with a new facility which is a wonderful tool of ministry. It was dedicated in a week long celebration. In this new facility there are spaces for many new ministries. One of these is an expanded response to the AIDS crisis. MCC-KC now has a multifaceted AIDS ministry. One is a counseling service, one is a visitation program and one is the Life Resource Center. The Life Resource Center is a walk-in center for the HIV Challenged. The center offers a place for those who are HIV Challenged to come to have a sense of connectedness. The center is open Tuesday through Friday from Noon to 5:00 pm. The center offers a light lunch in a dining room atmosphere. It further has a library with several hundred books in a wide variety of topics presented in a reading room surrounding.

The Life Resource Center was dedicated by Rev. Elder Troy Perry during the week of dedication. The staff of the AIDS Ministry was anointed and set aside.

MCC-KC AIDS Ministry is planning to have a prayer vigil starting on Oct. 31, 1990 to run through Nov. 3, 1990 (72 hours). The vigil will be started at the Mid-Week Worship service and conclude with a Worship service. An ecumenical approach to the whole vigil is planned with about 9 (nine) mainline congregations participating throughout the vigil.

The AIDS Ministry Team has composed a prayer which was co-authored by Rev. Wayne A. Gollihar; Frank Roberts, AIDS Ministry Team Champion; and Linda Roberts. Seeds of the prayer came from a prayer session between Rev. Gollihar and his spouse. After several weeks of prayer and re-drafts the final form of the prayer is offered for your consideration. (Scriptural references: Numbers 21: 5-9; Luke 11:9-13; Mark 14:22-24; Luke 22:19-20; John 13: 1-4; I Cor. 11:20-26 and John 6:26-71).

O God, You have commanded us to "Love your enemies - Bless them that curse you - Pray for them that despitefully use you." We ask You to help us love the H.I.V. We ask that you love the H.I.V. enough to cause it to physically and actually mutate from the lethal and deadly to the beneficial.

To this end we come to You as a child who asks the Good Parent for bread that You, O God, would change the stone of the H.I.V. among us to bread; that You, O God, would change the lethal serpent of the H.I.V. among us to a fish; that the lethal would become not merely benign but beneficial to all humankind through Your Grace and Power.

O God, we thank You that through the Grace of the Holy Communion, we have the Presence of Christ Jesus ever with us. Lord, just as You change the Eucharistic Elements from the common to the Sacred, we ask You to change the H.I.V. from the Life-Threatening to the Life-Giving.

O God, we praise You for Your Holy Word which tells us that what so ever sickness there be in the land, when prayer and supplication shall be made by Your People, You will hear from heaven and come to our aid that all may know Your ways and walk in them.

We thank You and praise You that You tell us that the battle is not ours but Yours, for greater is Your Spirit within us than even the H.I.V.

We thank You that just as the world stood in awe of You and Your chosen People in Joshua's time because of Your Miracles, so, too will the World stand in awe of You as this disease becomes beneficial, and so will they stand in awe of the people they cast down as lepers -- the H.I.V. challenged.

And so, O God, we ask this special blessing upon all the H.I.V. challenged throughout the world now. We praise You that through the indwelling power of Your Holy Spirit and the Gift of Faith we may claim these blessings in the name of Jesus Christ who lives and reigns with You. AMEN.

MCC-KC AIDS Ministry would welcome any assistance or suggestions that you may have. This Ministry would also be glad to assist any one to institute an AIDS Crisis Response Ministry. Write to them at P.O. Box 10087, Kansas City, MO 64111.

UPCOMING CONFERENCES

NATIONAL CONFERENCE ON WOMEN AND HIV INFECTION. December 13-14, 1990, at the Sheraton-Washington Hotel, Washington D.C. For more information contact Carol Gordon or Debra Steward at (301) 770-0610 between 9:00 a.m. and 4:00 p.m., EST. This conference is being coordinated by the National Institute of Allergy and Infectious Diseases, the National Institutes of Health, the Public Health Service, and the department of Health and Human Services.

EMPOWERING RESPONSE TO THE RAINBOW EPIDEMIC. UFMCC's Annual Conference on HIV/AIDS will be held January 19-21, 1991 at the Radisson West Maingate in Orlando, Florida. Registration is \$125 before December 19; \$145 thereafter. Keynote speakers include Sallie Perryman, featured in the Academy-Award winning "Common Threads," Phillip Matthews of MCC Dallas, and Rev. Elder Jeri Ann Harvey, UFMCC Evangelist.

RESOURCES FROM THE AIDS NATIONAL INTERFAITH NETWORK

LITURGICAL RESOURCES:

RESOURCES FOR HEALING AND PRAYER IN THE AGE OF AIDS

Available from AIDS Ministries Program of Connecticut, 1335 Asylum Avenue, Hartford, CT 06105-2295; (203) 233-4481. Cost: \$4.00 each, plus \$1.00 postage.

WORSHIP IN A TROUBLING TIME: AN AIDS-RELATED RESOURCE FOR THE UNITED CHURCH OF CHRIST

Available from AIDS Program, United Church Board for Homeland Ministries, 475 Riverside Drive, 10th Floor, New York, New York 10115; (212) 870-3425. Cost: \$0.50 each.

VIDEO RESOURCES:

A three-page catalogue of selected video resources on HIV/AIDS is available through the AIDS National Interfaith Network, 475 Riverside Drive, 10th Floor, New York, New York 10115, (212) 870-2100. Please enclose a self-addressed, stamped business-size envelope.

NEW RESOURCE FOR HIV+ WOMEN

"THE POSITIVE WOMAN: A Newsletter by, for, and about the HIV Positive Woman." The goals of this excellent new resource are: "1) To present up-to-date medical and legal information to women who have HIV. We also want to present alternative forms of healing and nutritional information applicable to our health care. 2) We will give you sources of where you can get information through organizations, books, and publications. 3) This publication is to let you know that you are not alone."

For subscription information, write: The Positive Woman, P.O. Box 33061, Washington, D.C. 20033-0061.

SURVIVING AIDS

By Michael Callen
Harper Collins, 1990; Hardback \$18.95

(Reviewed by Rev. Steve Pieters)

As someone who travels constantly to preach about hope in the face of HIV/AIDS, it is a great blessing to have a well-reasoned book on the subjects of hope and survival. Michael Callen's new book, Surviving AIDS, is a book that I hope every person who has HIV/AIDS or who cares for one of us, has a chance to read.

This book is an excellent supply of tools for people who are living with this disease, and for those who care.

Callen's chapter on "The Propaganda of Hopelessness" is an amazing analysis of how the media, the government, and physicians have conspired to keep the feeling of despair going around all reports and talk of AIDS.

One of the intriguing aspects of this book is the author's dialogue with himself over the spirituality of a number of the long-term survivors interviewed (including myself). Callen, a long-term survivor himself and a self-described "atheist" and "rationalist," is quick to pronounce his loathing of religion. And yet, he willingly considers the power of prayer and spirituality in his chapter, "Making Sense of Survival." Most of the survivors profiled profess the importance of faith or spirituality in living with HIV/AIDS.

What can I say that will get you to read this book? There is depth and intelligence here, it's a good read, and it's an important analysis of the AIDS "movement." It gives hope because it gives concrete information about the phenomenon of surviving HIV/AIDS.

NEWS FLASH

Rev. Dr. A. Stephen Pieters, Field Director for UFMCC AIDS Ministry, will be featured in the December, 1990, issue of LIFE Magazine. The issue's theme is "The Face of God."

To Subscribe to ALERT please write to the UFMCC AIDS Ministry, 5300 Santa Monica Blvd., Suite 304, Los Angeles, CA 90029, and we will send you a sample copy of ALERT and a form for you to fill out. ATTENTION: PWA's/PWARC's and any group or organization who is a service provider for AIDS will receive ALERT free of charge.

(Enclosed for your convenience is an offering envelope for the UFMCC AIDS Ministry. Thank you for your support!)